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Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund

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8 March 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

EXECUTIVE BOARD

First regular session of 1994

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 7th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 18 February 1994, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. ANSARI (India)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

PRESENTATION BY THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME ON THE THEME: "BUILDING A NEW UNDP: AGENDA FOR CHANGE" (continued)

1. Mr. SPETH (Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme) expressed his appreciation to members of the Executive Board for their contribution to the success of the session. The Bureau had performed its job skilfully and the Board appeared to be working through its agenda according to schedule. He looked forward to participating with resident representatives at the May meeting in a discussion of substantive issues.

2. Many members had spoken of a new spirit prevailing in UNDP; he intended to build upon that spirit to create a sense of commitment to follow up on recent reforms and, to that end, would be providing the Board with detailed information on progress in the implementation of reform measures. He thanked members for their comments on specific measures and said he would take them into consideration as he went about the task of implementation. Lastly, he said it had been heartening to hear so many intelligent and substantive questions and responses to his presentation and he believed the Executive Board and UNDP were off to a very good start.

ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD (continued)

3. The PRESIDENT recalled that, at the first meeting of the current session, he had drawn attention to General Assembly resolution 48/222 B of 23 December 1993, paragraph 3 of which encouraged all bodies currently entitled to written meeting records to review the need for such records and to communicate their recommendations to the Assembly at its forty-ninth session.

4. He understood that, during the course of formal and informal discussions on the organization of work of the Executive Board, a consensus had emerged to replace summary records of meetings during the regular session with a report prepared by the secretariat. While on the one hand, it might be prudent to postpone any decision on summary records until a later meeting, so that the Board would have an opportunity to try out the new procedure, it had been suggested that a decision on the matter should be taken before the end of the current session.

5. Mr. EIDHAMMER (Norway) wished to know whether the reports in question would be circulated only to members of the Board.

6. Mr. ABIBI (Congo) requested clarification regarding the languages in which the reports would be circulated.

7. Mr. MICHEL (France) asked whether regular reports would be approved at the annual session of the Board.

8. Mr. ROHNER (Observer for Switzerland) asked whether members of the Board would be receiving a report covering the current session.

9. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Executive Board) said reports would be available to all members of the Board and to observers; they would be translated into all the working languages and would be approved at the session immediately following the session covered by the report. Summary records would be issued for the current session, since the Board had not yet decided otherwise.

10. The PRESIDENT said he took it that the Executive Board wished to approve the proposal to replace the summary records for regular sessions of the Board with a report prepared by the secretariat, which would also contain the decisions taken by the Board and which would be circulated to members a few weeks after the session and would be approved at a subsequent meeting of the Board.

11. It was so decided.

12. The PRESIDENT recalled that the Board had approved a timetable for its sessions in 1994 with the exception of the autumn session, which, it had been suggested, should tentatively be scheduled for 5 to 7 October. It had come to his attention that those dates might coincide with the meeting of the Group of 77 which was normally held at that time. Following a discussion with the Chairman of the Group of 77 concerning the timing of the meeting, it remained uncertain whether the meeting of the Group of 77 would conclude on Tuesday, 4 October, or Wednesday, 5 October. In view of the uncertainty relating to the dates, he suggested that the Board should postpone its final decision on the matter until its next meeting.

13. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Executive Board) said he would try to arrange for conference services for 6, 7 and 10 October.

The meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m. and reconvened at 12.05 p.m.

HIV AND DEVELOPMENT NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL OFFICERS (continued) (DP/1994/L.1; DP/1994/5)

14. Ms. JACOBSEN (Norway), Vice-President, said that, reporting on the informal consultations on the item, a disagreement had emerged regarding the proposed decision to endorse a request for 22 new posts for HIV and Development National Professional Officers. However, consultations were continuing and she had requested Ms. Volkoff (Canada) to prepare a draft decision for the Board's consideration.

15. Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada) proposed for the Board's consideration the following draft decision relating to the appointment of HIV and Development National Professional Officers:

> "The Executive Board authorizes UNDP to continue its recruitment effort for the 22 HIV/AIDS positions, pending final approval of these 22 positions at its regular session in May. No contracts made for these positions may be signed before final approval is granted.

(Ms. Volkoff, Canada)

"The Executive Board's final decision should be based on firm assurances that any UNDP activity now and in the future will be integrated fully, with complementarity to and non-duplicative of existing multi-bi activities in this field and fully compatible with any joint co-sponsored United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS.

"The Executive Board will work towards the recommendation of the joint co-sponsored programme to ECOSOC no later than July 1994."

16. Ms. RIBEIRO-VANDERAUWERA (Belgium) said that the HIV/AIDS epidemic was making ever greater demands on the resources of the international community, even as the total amount of those resources was declining; therefore, every effort should be made to derive maximum value from contributions. However, in view of the overriding human need for the services of the 22 national professional officers, she believed that the proposal should be adopted by consensus.

17. Mr. JALLOW (Gambia) said that his delegation saw no need for the Executive Board to approve the signing of contracts. UNDP had already been given authorization to begin the recruitment process. It should therefore be able to proceed to appoint the candidates selected.

18. Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) said that the National Professional Officers programme represented the first opportunity for UNDP to implement the provisions of General Assembly resolution 47/199 in the area of HIV/AIDS. The report of the Administrator (DP/1994/5) stated that, pending the formulation of a joint strategy, UNDP would assist countries by providing staff support for the resident representatives. The national professional officers would report to the resident representatives/coordinators, which should meet any concerns regarding coordination.

19. Coordination was an intangible and subjective objective and it could take some time before it was achieved in practice. The crisis was extremely urgent, however, and immediate action was needed. The Executive Board had already approved the programme in principle, and waiting until the May session for its final approval would mean unnecessary delay.

20. Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada) said that she understood the concerns about bureaucratic obstacles to the implementation of the programme, and her proposal did not request formal agreement on a joint project. It would be useful, however, to verify with the AIDS Task Force at its forthcoming meeting that the 22 posts in question were part of a larger strategy.

21. Mr. MONROE (United States of America) said that the Canadian proposal struck a balance between the need to move forward on the matter and the need for a coordinated approach. Therefore, while the proposed approach did not meet the expectations raised the previous June, it could be accepted as a compromise.

22. Mr. BABA (Observer for Uganda) said that the posts had been approved in principle at the June 1993 meeting of the Governing Council. Given the urgency of the situation, he appealed to the Executive Board to authorize UNDP to continue its recruitment efforts, pending the early establishment of a joint cooperation programme.

23. Ms. NOTEBOOM (Observer for the Netherlands) said that her delegation had difficulty with the proviso "pending final approval" in paragraph 1 of the proposed text, since approval had already been given. She wondered who would provide the "firm assurances" requested in paragraph 2.

24. Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) inquired what efforts could be made in the period before contracts were signed to indicate that some progress was being made, and wondered if more time was needed for recruitment.

25. Mr. EIDHAMMER (Norway) said that his delegation regretted that the Board could not be more decisive. Paragraph 3 of the proposal was somewhat ambiguous with regard to the kind of decision the Board was requested to take, since it was not yet ready to discuss the joint programme on HIV/AIDS.

26. Mr. JALLOW (Gambia) asked how much time would be necessary to recruit and deploy the national professional officers in question.

27. Ms. REID (Director, HIV and Development Programme) said that, on the basis of the approval in principle that had been given, the field offices had been notified and many had already identified candidates whom they were ready to recruit. Any delay might result in the loss of excellent candidates. Training for the national professional officers had also been scheduled within the context of ongoing training activities, as there were no resources in the budget for specialized training courses.

28. Mr. JALLOW (Gambia) suggested that the Executive Board might approve the implementation of the programme for the establishment of the HIV and Development National Professional Officers at the country level within the context of the unified, coordinated and collaborative United Nations response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic at the country level and request the UNDP Administration to ensure non-duplication of existing HIV/AIDS activities being carried out by other United Nations agencies.

29. Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) said that the information provided by the Director confirmed that only a decision along the lines proposed by the representative of the Gambia would make sense.

30. Mr. HORIGUCHI (Japan) said that, as many other speakers had noted, the main problem lay in achieving coordination among the various United Nations agencies involved with HIV/AIDS. While the problem of AIDS was very urgent, it was important to utilize the limited resources in an effective way.

31. Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) said that it was clear that there was no consensus about either of the compromise proposals put forward. He recalled that UNDP had significantly reduced its administrative budget for the current biennium and had cut a number of international posts; the trade-off had been an increase in the number of national officer posts, half of which were to focus on sustainable development, and the other half, on HIV and development. It should be noted that the original intention had been to increase UNDP's field capacity in general, not just in the areas of sustainable development and HIV/AIDS; the Board had a responsibility to the UNDP field structure. He suggested that the item should be taken up at the May session and that UNDP should be requested not to enter into any binding agreements before them.

32. Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) said that the second proposal made by the representative of the United Kingdom was unnecessary; the Board needed to take a decision to move forward. If there was no consensus the Board would have to be guided by Governing Council decision 1993/35.

33. Mr. BABA (Observer for Uganda) said that if the Board waited until the May session, it would still be in the same situation. There was clearly a need for the national officer posts. The AIDS pandemic was raging and action must be taken.

34. Mr. MONROE (United States of America) said that it was regrettable that the Board had been unable to arrive at a compromise solution. The Canadian proposal would have moved the Board forward towards a coordinated global effort. The Board was missing an opportunity to advance the concept of coordination and cohesion and optimize the resources that were available to confront the pandemic; at the very least, it should decide to take up the matter at its May session.

35. Mr. PEDERSEN (Denmark) said that it was regrettable that the Board was not able to move forward; the only option was to be guided by Governing Council decision 1993/35.

36. Ms. NOTEBOOM (Observer for the Netherlands) said that her Government felt that the best approach to combating AIDS was a joint programme. Clarification was needed on how the national officers would be integrated within the jointly sponsored programme.

37. Mr. DIECKERT (Germany) said that his delegation could support the Canadian proposal as a compromise. The Board could not continue to postpone taking a decision. He shared the concern of many speakers about the lack of coordination within the United Nations; UNDP should be requested to report back on the progress achieved in the coordination process.

38. Miss JANJUA (Pakistan) said that all that needed to be done was to implement Governing Council decision 1993/35. It would be irresponsible to defer action; the AIDS pandemic could not be ignored. If the Board had difficulty in approving 22 posts, it could perhaps approve half the posts. At the May session, it could then decide whether the rest were required, and, if so, in which countries they should be deployed. The Board had to give a very

(Miss Janjua, Pakistan)

clear signal to the United Nations system that it must come together on the issue of AIDS. The WHO/Global Programme on AIDS would not be affected by the appointment of the national officers.

39. Mr. CLAVIJO (Observer for Colombia) said that there seemed to be consensus that the Board's original mandate needed to be reaffirmed and that more time was needed to seek a response to some concerns.

40. He suggested that the Board should take a decision in which it reaffirmed Governing Council decision 1993/35, decided to take action, at its regular session in May 1994, on the issue of HIV and Development National Professional Officers, and requested the Administrator to respond at that time to the concerns raised by delegations on the matter and to continue the relevant administrative preparations for its implementation.

41. Mr. MONROE (United States of America) said that the Colombian proposal was not acceptable.

42. The PRESIDENT suggested that the Board should continue its consideration of the matter at its next meeting.

43. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.

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on Friday, 18 February 1994, at 4 p.m.

President: Mr. ANSARI (India)

CONTENTS

HIV and Development National Professional Officers (continued)

Other matters

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The meeting was called to order at 4.15 p.m.

HIV AND DEVELOPMENT NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL OFFICERS (continued) (DP/1994/5)

1. Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada), reporting on the outcome of informal consultations on HIV and Development National Professional Officers, said that there was general agreement to adopt the following draft decision:

"The Executive Board authorizes UNDP to complete the hiring of 22 national officers as per decision 93/35 on condition that:

(1) The HIV/AIDS Inter-Agency Working Group reviews the terms of reference and proposed locations of these 22 posts and agrees in writing that these are consistent with a longer-term staffing strategy compatible with the establishment of a joint co-sponsored United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS;

(2) The contracts are for a duration of six months only and are reviewed by the Executive Board at its autumn session in 1994 before further approval is given;

(3) UNDP gives firm assurances to the Executive Board that any UNDP activity now and in the future will be fully integrated with, complementary to, and non-duplicative of existing activities of other United Nations agencies in this field and fully compatible with a joint co-sponsored United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS;

(4) UNDP treats with urgency negotiation of a joint co-sponsored programme and brings to the May regular session of the Executive Board further information on how it will integrate its activities in HIV/AIDS with such a programme so that the Executive Board can work towards a recommendation of a joint co-sponsored programme to the Economic and Social Council no later than July 1994."

2. Mr. EDGREN (Assistant Administrator and Director, Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation) said that adoption of the draft decision would not in any way prejudge the outcome of negotiations with respect to the joint co-sponsored programme. He assured the Executive Board that current and future UNDP activities would be fully integrated with, complementary to, and non-duplicative of existing activities of other United Nations agencies.

3. The PRESIDENT said he would take it that the Board wished to adopt the draft decision.

4. It was so decided.

OTHER MATTERS

5. Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) proposed that in view of the complexity of the question of the future of the Office for Project Services (OPS) and the number of parties involved, the Executive Board should request its President to appoint a facilitator to guide an open-ended informal contact group in making preparations for the discussion of the issue of OPS at the regular session in May 1994.

6. Miss JANJUA (Pakistan) said she saw no need to establish an ad hoc group to discuss the issue of OPS between the current and the May session. The result of the proposal would be that the Executive Board would, in effect, be meeting throughout the year. Moreover, there was no need for a facilitator, as any member of the Bureau could coordinate such consultations as might be required.

7. Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) said that all the delegations he had consulted with had agreed that in view of the heavy workload of the May session and of the technical nature of the issue of OPS, it would be useful for all the parties concerned to meet once or twice before that time to discuss the issue. There was no intention to preempt the Executive Board. The aim was merely to facilitate the work of delegations and to give them an opportunity to become better informed prior to the May session. Obviously any decision on OPS would have to be taken by the plenary Executive Board at a formal session. He had used the term "facilitator" in order to stress the informal nature of the discussions and would have no problem with the selection of one of the vice-chairmen to coordinate the discussions.

8. Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) said that his delegation would, like those of most developing countries, be unable to participate in informal consultations between regular sessions. While nothing prevented interested delegations from meeting to discuss OPS, such meetings should not be conducted under the auspices of the Executive Board.

9. Miss JANJUA (Pakistan) said that as the representative of Morocco had indicated, it would be extremely difficult for delegations of developing countries to deal with UNDP issues year-round. While delegations which wished to hold consultations could do so, their decisions would not be binding on the other members of the Board. However, should an urgent need for consultations arise, the President of the Board could designate a member of the Bureau to conduct such consultations a day before the Board met in May.

10. Mr. CABEIRO QUINTANA (Cuba) said that he agreed with the delegations of Morocco and Pakistan that it was not necessary for the Board to establish an informal group to deal with OPS issues. While any delegation that wished to meet with others was free to do so, there was no need for the Board to take a specific decision on the matter.

11. Mr. HALDEA (India) said that while he understood the spirit in which the United Kingdom proposal had been made, he agreed with the views put forward by the representative of Morocco.

12. Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) expressed the hope that the representative of Pakistan was not suggesting that there was anything improper about his delegation's proposal. The proposal had been made with a view to soliciting everyone's opinions on it. In view of the concerns expressed by a number of delegations, he would withdraw the proposal. However, his delegation intended to do some informal preparatory work with interested delegations prior to the May session and hoped that the Bureau would keep the subject under review and consider whether there was a need for the kind of pre-session meeting mentioned by the representative of Pakistan.

13. Mr. CLAVIJO (Observer for Colombia) said that it was crucial to have very intensive preliminary discussions on OPS so that informed decisions could be

(Mr. Clavijo, Observer, Colombia)

taken by the Board on the matter in May. There was a need to ensure that all delegations that were members of the Board or observers were kept fully informed about when the informal consultations would take place. There should also be adequate representation of the UNDP secretariat. His delegation agreed that the consultations should be informal.

14. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Executive Board) said that, as requested by the General Assembly, briefing sessions and informal consultations with the entire membership of UNDP would be organized between regular sessions of the Board. Should the Board so desire, the UNDP secretariat could arrange for an informal consultation on the question of OPS in connection with one of the briefing sessions to be organized prior to the May session.

15. Mr. GONCHAROV (Russian Federation) commended the United Kingdom representative for his initiative with regard to the very important and highly complicated issue of OPS with a view to expediting the Board's consideration of the issue at the May session. Had the proposal not been withdrawn, his delegation would have supported it.

16. Mr. MARRERO (United States of America) said that the United Kingdom proposal was constructive and useful. While the issue of OPS must be resolved by the plenary Board, it might be too complicated and sensitive for it to be dealt with in May without some amount of prior preparation and consultation.

17. Mr. JONG (Observer for the Netherlands) supported the views expressed by the Observer for Colombia and asked the United Kingdom representative to explain how he intended to go about dealing with that very important issue.

18. Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) said that the aim of his proposal had been to arrange for informal consultations prior to the May session of the Board that would be as open and transparent as possible. He was sure that some preparatory work on the question of OPS would be welcomed not only by many delegations but also by the UNDP secretariat and OPS itself. He was sure he could count on the cooperation of the UNDP secretariat in helping to ensure that the process was open and participatory.

19. Mr. BABA (Observer for Uganda) said that his delegation favoured the principle of consultations before sessions of the Board with the aim of expediting the decision-making process.

20. Mr. KING (Observer for Trinidad and Tobago) said that his delegation shared the view that consultation prior to the May session would facilitate the Board's consideration of the question of OPS. It should, however, be understood that the consultations would have no decision-making role. The concerns of the delegations of Morocco and Pakistan with respect to the participation of developing countries in such consultations could be addressed by requesting the secretariat to ensure that consultations were not scheduled at the same time as other meetings which developing countries that were members of the Executive Board might be required to attend.

21. Miss JANJUA (Pakistan) said that at no point had her delegation implied that the United Kingdom proposal was not well-intentioned. Her concern was for delegations which had difficulties in participating in a continuous round of

(Miss Janjua, Pakistan)

discussions and negotiations relating to the Executive Board. She did not favour the establishment of ad hoc inter-sessional mechanisms. As the Secretary had indicated, a mechanism already existed for informal consultation and briefings by the secretariat.

22. Mr. ZEBRAKOVSKY (Observer for the Czech Republic) said that he understood that some delegations were overwhelmed by the volume of meetings, but that the United Kingdom proposal was quite reasonable and could help delegations to understand better all the problems relating to the future of OPS.

23. Mr. STELZER (Observer for Austria) said that although he was not sure whether his delegation could participate in any inter-sessional process, it would support the suggestion made by the United Kingdom delegation since it would, in the end, make decisions on and final assessments of a complex issue much easier.

24. The PRESIDENT said he took it that it was the understanding of the Board that any discussions and consultations which interested delegations might wish to hold before the May session to consider the question of OPS should be informal and should not be considered as taking place under the auspices of the Board.

25. It was so decided.

26. Mr. ROHNER (Observer for Switzerland) said that it would be useful if the Board's future reports were prepared, adopted and issued at the end of a session in order to enable representatives to report the results of the session to their capitals immediately. That meant that, at the end of the session, the Board would have to set aside some time to complete the report.

27. Mr. VAN ARENDONK (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) thanked the Executive Board for the flexibility it had shown on UNFPA items. Most of those items would be taken up at the Board's annual session.

28. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Executive Board) commended the Board on the way in which it had conducted its first session.

29. The PRESIDENT said that, at its first session, the Executive Board had agreed to hold a regular session in New York from 10 to 13 May 1994, its annual session at Geneva from 6 to 17 June 1994, and a three-day regular session in New York beginning around 6 October, immediately following the conclusion of the meeting of the Group of 77. It had also agreed to hold its first regular session of 1995 in New York from 10 to 13 January.

30. The Board had agreed on the division of labour between the three sessions to be held in May, June and October 1994, and on the subjects to be discussed at each session. If necessary, new subjects could be added later. The Board had also agreed to have an informal briefing with resident representatives on 18 March 1994, and to let the Bureau of the Board decide on the dates for field visits.

31. The Board had begun a preliminary discussion of its rules of procedure. Representatives had been encouraged to submit their proposals in writing to the

(The President)

secretariat. The members of the Board seemed to agree that the matter should be taken up again both at the May session and at the annual session in June.

32. The members of the Board had agreed that new working methods were needed to enable the Board to deal with the many items on the agendas for its May, June and October sessions. The Board had decided that reports from the secretariat should normally consist of no more than three pages and should include sections identifying the objective of the report, means of implementation and the decision requested of the Board. Where unavoidable, additional information would be provided in an annex or an addendum to the report.

33. The Board had decided to replace the summary records for its regular sessions with a report prepared by the secretariat, which would also contain the decisions taken by the Board. The report would be distributed to members a few weeks after the session and would be approved at the following session of the Board.

34. In its consideration of meeting facilities at Headquarters, the Board had taken into account the statement by the Secretary of the Executive Board and the estimated costs he had presented. The Board would follow with great interest the deliberations in the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on the issue of meeting facilities for the regular sessions of the UNICEF Executive Board. The question of future headquarters premises of UNDP and UNFPA would also have to be considered, and the Board would be interested in hearing a progress report on the matter at its second regular session in May.

35. The Board had authorized UNDP to complete the hiring of 22 HIV and Development National Professional Officers to support the role of the resident coordinator/resident representative in the national response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

36. The Administrator had given a powerful presentation, entitled "Building a New UNDP: Agenda for Change", and his ideas had been generally welcomed by the Board.

37. Finally, the Board had expressed its appreciation to Mr. Luís María Gómez, who had served as Associate Administrator from 1990 until the first day of the current session. In a decision, the Board had thanked Mr. Gómez sincerely for his exceptional contribution to the work of UNDP.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.